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Letter dated 29 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the fortieth annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77, held at Headquarters in New York on 23 September 2016 (see annex).

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 9, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 39, 43, 49, 53, 58, 59, 60, 62, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 73, 77, 87, 117, 121, 123, 124, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 145, 146, 148 and 149.

(*Signed*) Virachai **Plasai**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations
Chair of the Group of 77

Annex to the letter dated 29 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Declaration adopted at the fortieth annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77

New York, 23 September 2016

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77 and China met at Headquarters in New York on 23 September 2016 on the occasion of their fortieth annual meeting. The Ministers reviewed the world economic situation, the recent developments in the world and the particular challenges faced by developing countries in the economic, social and environmental areas and adopted the following Declaration:

1. The Ministers highlighted that 2016 marked the first year of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development towards a sustainable future. It is therefore important to show the international community the continued unwavering commitment of the Group of 77 to further translating ambitions set out in the Agenda into real action. In that regard, the Ministers noted that 2017 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the first ministerial meeting of the Group, which, in October 1967, had adopted the Charter of Algiers, the first platform of the Group, in which it called for joint efforts by developing countries towards economic and social development, peace and prosperity.

2. The Ministers noted that all the principles of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, were reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda. They also reaffirmed that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should be guided by the principles contained in its paragraph 74.

3. The Ministers reaffirmed that the overarching objective of the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions remained the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. They reiterated that poverty eradication was a central imperative of the 2030 Agenda and emphasized the need to address poverty in all its forms and dimensions in order to truly leave no one behind. In that regard, they reaffirmed their commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030 in a balanced and integrated manner to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions and to building on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business. In that regard, the Ministers emphasized that the international community must address the challenges and needs faced by developing countries, especially countries in special situations, in particular African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as specific challenges that many middle-income countries, conflict and post-conflict countries and countries and peoples living under foreign occupation face.

4. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, inclusive economic growth, protection of the environment and social inclusion, in a balanced manner, without emphasizing one over the other.

5. The Ministers welcomed the progress made by Member States in their national implementation, but stressed that implementing the 2030 Agenda at all levels required a revitalized global partnership and the full implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17. In that regard, enhancing support for developing countries is fundamental, including through the provision of financial resources, the transfer of technology on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, enhanced international support and targeted capacity-building and promoting a rules-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system. They urged the international community and relevant stakeholders to make real progress on those issues, including by developing action plans to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They expressed appreciation for the Group of 20 Summit, held in Hangzhou, China, on 4 and 5 September 2016, which was the first Group of 20 Summit to be held in a developing country following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and which enjoyed the broad participation of developing countries, including the Chair of the Group of 77. The Summit participants endorsed the Group of 20 action plan on the 2030 Agenda as an important contribution to the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

6. The Ministers underlined the importance of a comprehensive follow-up and review at the global level, as well as at the regional level, as appropriate, in order to assess the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that its overall objectives of poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development are duly attained. In that regard, they took note of General Assembly resolution 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, in which the Assembly underscored the shared vision and aspiration of all Member States for the crucial path set forth to assess the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They reiterated and reaffirmed that the implementation and the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda must include and address the severe difficulties faced by countries and peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation and strive to remove the obstacles to their full realization of the rights to self-determination and to development, which adversely affect their economic and social development, their environment and their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that they will not be left behind.

7. The Ministers reaffirmed that the high-level political forum on sustainable development was mandated to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on the implementation of sustainable development commitments and that it had a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes regarding the 2030 Agenda at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in line with existing mandates. They welcomed the successful convening of the first high-level political forum following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, and commended the countries that had presented voluntary national reviews at the 2016 forum to

highlight the early steps taken to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Ministers took note with appreciation of the ministerial declaration of the 2016 forum on the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind", in which the ministers and high representatives highlighted the fundamental dignity of the human person and the need to reach the furthest behind and the most vulnerable first.

8. The Ministers underlined that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda would depend on enabling an international environment for development, facilitating the necessary means of implementation, in particular in the areas of finance, international trade, technology and capacity-building to developing countries. In that regard, they called for a sincere and effective follow-up to the global commitments of all actors, in particular developed countries.

9. The Ministers are of the firm view that, for economic growth to positively contribute to poverty reduction, it is essential that macroeconomic and social policies focus on job creation and social inclusion, as this will reduce inequalities and aid in providing social protection. Furthermore, the Ministers highlighted the need to invest much more in infrastructure, interconnectivity, productivity and basic services, such as quality health-care services and education as a catalyst to economic growth, while also ensuring that all people, including women, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples and people in vulnerable situations, have access to resources and opportunities.

10. The Ministers called upon the United Nations system, in consultation with the international financial institutions, to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income, building on existing initiatives, as appropriate. These should recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of domestic output and structural gaps at all levels. In that regard, the Ministers underscored the importance of achieving concrete progress on that issue.

11. The Ministers welcomed the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which was adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015. The Ministers acknowledged that meaningful gains were attained in Addis Ababa as far as funding for development was concerned and that the reaffirmation of the principles of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was foregrounded. There was, however, inter alia, a dire need for the development partners to meet their current official development assistance commitments and to scale them up in support of the aspirations that have been set under the 2030 Agenda. The Ministers reasserted that developing countries would continue to advocate for additional funding for development to be made available, with North-South cooperation central to those efforts.

12. The Ministers took note of the agreed conclusions and recommendations of the inaugural Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, held from 18 to 20 April 2016, stressed the need for a constructive engagement by developed and developing countries to fulfil the mandates of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and in that regard highlighted the importance of assessing progress, identifying obstacles and challenges to the implementation of the financing for development outcomes, addressing new and emerging topics of relevance to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as the need

arises, and providing policy recommendations for action by the international community, in particular regarding the support of developed countries for developing countries.

13. The Ministers welcomed the successful implementation of important initiatives under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including the inaugural Global Infrastructure Forum, held in Washington, D.C., on 16 April 2016, and the establishment of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism. They emphasized the significance of those initiatives in enabling developing countries to achieve the tangible outcomes of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda, taking into account that infrastructure is a powerful driver of economic growth and contributes to tremendous economic, social and environmental development, while science, technology and innovation is one of the most transformative means of implementing sustainable development.

14. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the meeting on investment for sustainable development of the Group of 77, held in Pattaya, Thailand, on 4 and 5 May 2016, and its conclusions and recommendations. They recalled the continued trend of declining investment flows in developing countries, in particular in productive sectors, and recommended a resolution of the General Assembly on investment for sustainable development in order to mobilize maximal efforts of the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to promote investment for the implementation of 2030 Agenda and strengthen developing countries' capacities in that regard.

15. The Ministers welcomed the entry into force of the proposed amendment to the articles of agreement on reform of the executive board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the 2010 quota increase and stressed the need to continue to broaden and strengthen the voice and participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance.

16. The Ministers noted with appreciation the Group of 77's active and constructive engagement with all stakeholders during the forum on financing for development follow-up, which is the main mechanism to follow up on the financing for development outcomes, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. They highlighted the challenges facing developing countries, including unfulfilled official development assistance commitments. The Ministers expressed their concern that, notwithstanding the increase in official development assistance (ODA) in the past decade, it was, on average, 0.29 per cent of the aggregate donor gross national income in 2014, well below the commitment of 0.7 per cent.

17. While commending the few countries that had reached the ODA target, the Ministers stressed the need to urgently address the unmet ODA commitments, given that North-South cooperation remains the main channel of financing for development for developing countries. They noted with concern that efforts and the genuine will to address those issues were lagging behind, as reflected in the 2016 outcome document of the forum on financing for development follow-up, which had failed to address those important issues.

18. The Ministers reaffirmed the paramount importance of ODA in supporting the sustainable development needs of developing countries, in particular African

countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, middle-income countries and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. In that regard, developed countries must commit themselves to fully implementing their ODA commitments in keeping with their previous undertakings and to scale up those efforts to play a meaningful role in eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions. The Ministers called for the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development to be revitalized and reinvigorated.

19. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the implementation of various projects and initiatives under South-South cooperation in recent years and reaffirmed the importance of further strengthening South-South cooperation, especially in the current international economic environment, and reiterated their support for South-South cooperation as a strategy to sustain the development efforts of developing countries and as a means of enhancing their participation, including through sharing knowledge and best practices, in the global economy.

20. The Ministers reaffirmed the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, recognized the importance, unique history and particularities of South-South cooperation and reaffirmed their view of South-South cooperation as a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals, and the Sustainable Development Goals. South-South cooperation and its agenda have to be set by countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

21. The Ministers reiterated their position that South-South cooperation was a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation and reaffirmed that South-South cooperation was a collective endeavour of developing countries and that, consequently, South-South cooperation deserved its own separate and independent promotion, as reaffirmed in the Nairobi outcome document. In that regard, the Ministers stressed that South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South. South-South cooperation, which is critical for developing countries, therefore requires a long-term vision and a global institutional arrangement, as envisioned at the Second South Summit of the Group of 77.

22. The Ministers noted the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, to be held in 2018, which represents an opportunity to enhance the current institutional arrangements to better support South-South cooperation and promote the South-South agenda. In this context, the Ministers strongly recommended the consolidation of existing mechanisms for South-South cooperation and called for the establishment of a United Nations specialized agency for South-South cooperation, to be located in a developing country.

23. The Ministers highlighted the critical importance for developing countries of ensuring that the conceptual framework underlying South-South cooperation

responded to the new and numerous challenges faced by developing countries through the exploration of new ways of thinking and new modalities, in line with evolving realities, thereby making it an important pillar to further strengthen South-South cooperation.

24. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the high-level panel of eminent personalities of the South in Bangkok on 9 and 10 March 2016, in accordance with the relevant mandate of the Second South Summit. They welcomed the panel's conclusions and recommendations on the future architecture of South-South cooperation as an important contribution to the further development of the Development Platform for the South.

25. The Ministers stressed that the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation was the central multilateral policymaking body in the United Nations system to review and assess global and system-wide progress on and support for South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation, and to assist in providing future guidance and direction on those issues for the benefit of developing countries. They urged all partners interested in supporting South-South cooperation to be guided by the principles and objectives of such cooperation established in such internationally agreed documents as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 33/134, and the Nairobi outcome document, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/222, and other relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Ministers therefore reiterated the Group of 77's position that any policy debate outside the United Nations system should be guided by the agreed frameworks cited above and the Yamoussoukro Consensus on South-South Cooperation.

26. The Ministers reiterated their strong support for the mandate of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and stressed that it was the articulator of South-South cooperation in the United Nations system and that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the entities of the United Nations development system should not duplicate, overlap with or undertake the system-wide functions and responsibilities of the Office. They reaffirmed the importance of further enhancing the role and impact of the Office and scaling it up in terms of financial, human and budgetary resources in order to galvanize more coherent and coordinated United Nations system support for South-South and triangular cooperation in order to implement the 2030 Agenda.

27. The Ministers recommended that the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation be enabled to participate in the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, in keeping with its status as a separate entity within the United Nations for the global coordination and promotion of South-South cooperation for development on a system-wide basis, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions. They reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the Office with human and financial capacity and recognized the need to mobilize adequate resources for enhancing South-South cooperation, and in that regard invited Member States to make generous contributions in support of such cooperation through, inter alia, the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation and the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation.

28. The Ministers invited the States members of the Group of 77 to come forward with an offer of a venue for hosting the thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee for Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries, to be held in 2017. They also invited Member States to host sectoral meetings in various fields of cooperation, including South-South forums for parliamentarians, mayors, young people, the media and civil society, and other thematic meetings, as envisaged in the Doha Plan of Action adopted at the Second South Summit, held in Doha from 12 to 16 June 2005, and looked forward to the continued support of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in that regard.

29. The Ministers noted that, in view of the mounting and intractable challenges that developing countries face, more frequent high-level meetings of the Group of 77 on thematic or sectoral issues, with action-oriented outcomes, might be required. To that end, the Ministers invited States members of the Group to make offers to host regular high-level meetings of the Group on key issues of interest to the South and looked forward to the continued support of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in that regard.

30. The Ministers noted the preparations for the Third South Summit and invited the Chair of the Group of 77 to continue his consultations with States members of the Group for the hosting of the Summit to be held at a convenient date.

31. The Ministers welcomed the convening of a round table entitled "Sufficiency economy: an approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals" and a forum entitled "Sufficiency economy philosophy in business: a G-77 forum on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals", held in Bangkok on 28 and 29 February and on 1 and 2 June 2016, respectively. They noted that there were different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country to achieve sustainable development, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities and its own development context, and in that regard welcomed the initiative by the Kingdom of Thailand to share its development experience and promote partnerships among the States members of the Group of 77 on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular through applying the sufficiency economy philosophy as an approach for sustainable development that focuses on transforming the economics of exploitation into the economics of moderation, resilience and self-immunity guided by knowledge, ethics and moral considerations, with a view to harmonizing the economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects of development.

32. The Ministers welcomed the fruitful and productive discussion from the interactive thematic dialogue on sufficiency economy philosophy for the Sustainable Development Goals, convened on the occasion of the fortieth annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 under the leadership of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand as Chair of the Group. They noted the various experiences of and home-grown approaches to achieving the Goals and the importance of learning and sharing of best practices, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. They recognized sufficiency economy philosophy as a practical approach that could support the implementation and achievement of the Goals and its universality, underscored by its successful application in various development projects in a number of countries of the Group, including the partnership of sufficiency economy philosophy for the Goals.

33. The Ministers approved the report of the thirty-first meeting of the committee of experts of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation and endorsed its recommendations. The Ministers commended the Chair of the Fund for his continued commitment and expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved by the Fund. In the light of the substantial decrease in the interest earnings of the Fund, caused by the current world financial situation, as reported by the Chair, the Ministers appealed to every Member State to make a significant contribution to the Fund on the occasion of the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, to be held in New York on 7 November 2016.

34. The Ministers approved the financial statement of the economic cooperation among developing countries account of the Group of 77 contained in document G-77/AM(XXVIII)/2016/3, as presented by the Chair of the Group, and urged those Member States that had not yet done so to make special efforts to pay their outstanding contributions.

35. The Ministers reiterated that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular the means of implementation, required a revitalized and State-led global partnership for development. They therefore reaffirmed their strong commitment to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities, through the delivery of the means of implementation, as contained in Sustainable Development Goal 17, and in each specific Goal.

36. The Ministers reiterated their position that developing countries should be supported by an enabling international environment, which includes a supportive and just international system in which the rules are fair and pro-development, and a genuine and revitalized global partnership to enable developing countries to meet their sustainable development aspirations.

37. The Ministers stressed that an enabling international environment could be achieved through the provision of additional financing resources, technology transfer and diffusion with concessional and preferential terms, capacity-building, strengthened data collection and analysing capacity, pro-development trade policies, the equitable and effective participation of developing countries in global economic governance and adequate means of implementation for developing countries. They asserted that a strengthened and scaled-up global partnership for development was critical for developing countries in delivering the 2030 Agenda.

38. The Ministers stressed that technology was a key means of implementation and the most important lever of change for achieving sustainable development. However, the developing world is still facing a digital divide in which fixed-broadband services are unaffordable and/or unavailable across much of the population. They urged all relevant stakeholders to provide enhanced and coordinated support to address that digital divide through effective and sustainable technical assistance and capacity-building, which would be tailored to the specific needs and constraints of developing countries. They were encouraged that the operationalization and effective functioning of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries would assist those countries in the structural transformation required in the area of science, technology and innovation.

39. The Ministers recalled that the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda had established the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, which is one of the most important tools to support the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, even though they noted that some progress had been made in all three components of the Mechanism, namely, the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, an online platform as a gateway for information on existing initiatives, mechanisms and programmes on science, technology and innovation and the launch of the first annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, they made an urgent call for the online platform to become operational as soon as possible as a gateway for information on existing initiatives, mechanisms and programmes on science, technology and innovation.

40. The Ministers emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for developing countries to bridge the technological and digital divide, including the gender divide and access to technology between developed and developing countries. Those gaps have prevented developing countries and the poor from realizing the full benefit of technology. There is an urgent need to channel effective and sustainable technical assistance and capacity-building that is tailored to the specific needs and constraints of developing countries into addressing the technology infrastructure and the capacity constraints of developing countries, in particular in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Channelling such technical assistance and capacity-building is also indispensable to strengthening educational institutions and research and development organizations in developing countries. Last but not least, the Ministers wholeheartedly encouraged the development, dissemination and diffusion and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, for their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

41. The Ministers affirmed that States had, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and development policies and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

42. The Ministers also reaffirmed that the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned.

43. While emphasizing the sovereignty of their countries and peoples over their natural wealth, the Ministers are also aware of the duty to conserve and sustainably manage and use those resources and ensure the conditions for nature and ecosystems to have the capacity to regenerate for the benefit of present and future generations. The Ministers also recognized that the sustainable use of natural resources was an effective way to achieve economic growth while reducing poverty and environmental degradation.

44. The Ministers emphasized that transnational corporations had a responsibility to respect all human rights and should refrain from causing environmental degradation and environmental disasters and affecting the well-being of peoples.

45. The Ministers took note of the holding of the first session of the open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, held in Geneva from 6 to 10 July 2015, and encouraged all Member States to participate actively and constructively in the fulfilment of the working group's mandate in the upcoming sessions.

46. The Ministers reiterated that each country has the sovereign right to decide its own development priorities and strategies and that there was no "one size fits all" approach. In that regard, they stressed the need for policy space and policy flexibility for developing countries.

47. In that context, the Ministers reaffirmed that the imposition of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries, did not contribute to economic development, including dialogue and understanding among countries.

48. The Ministers recalled that sovereign debt matters should concern both developed and developing countries and should be considered a matter that has the potential to adversely affect the global economy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals if left unchecked. In that regard, the Ministers welcomed progress on debt and debt sustainability. The Ministers urged all States Members of the United Nations to further discuss sovereign debt restructuring and management processes, with active inclusive participation and engagement by all relevant stakeholders, in order to nurture and strengthen those processes. The Ministers also reaffirmed the roles of the United Nations and the international financial institutions in accordance with their respective mandates.

49. The Ministers recognized the need to assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate. Many countries remain vulnerable to debt crises and some are in the midst of crises, including a number of the least developed countries, small island developing States and some developed countries. They reiterated that debtors and creditors must work together to prevent and resolve unsustainable debt situations. Maintaining sustainable debt levels is the responsibility of the borrowing countries; however, they acknowledged that lenders also have a responsibility to lend in a way that does not undermine a country's debt sustainability. The Ministers will support the maintenance of debt sustainability of those countries that have received debt relief and achieved sustainable debt levels.

50. The Ministers reiterated their concern about the activities of so-called "vulture funds" and their actions of a highly speculative nature, which pose a risk to all future debt-restructuring processes, for both developing and developed countries. They therefore stressed the importance of preventing vulture funds from paralysing debt-restructuring efforts.

51. The Ministers welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolution 69/319 entitled "Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring

Processes" as an important step and noted its invitation to all Member States and observer States, competent international organizations, entities and other relevant stakeholders to support and promote the Basic Principles.

52. The Ministers encouraged the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to continue its analytical and policy work and technical assistance on debt issues and to promote policies for responsible sovereign borrowing and lending, complementing the work done by the World Bank, IMF and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

53. The Ministers reiterated that international trade could serve as an engine for inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development and reaffirmed the need to address the imbalances, discrimination and inequities of the global trading system, including the need for the urgent correction and prevention of trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, and to find balanced outcomes that would allow developing countries to effectively engage in global trade. They expressed concern that, in 2015, the share of exports of goods and commercial services from the least developed countries had fallen to 0.9 per cent. Although the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) contains calls for steps to ensure that the global trade share of the least developed countries will double from 1 per cent by 2020, no initiatives are foreseen in this regard. The Ministers underlined the need to undertake the measures necessary at all levels to realize the Istanbul Programme of Action's target for the least developed countries. The Ministers stressed the need to enhance the share of exports from developing countries.

54. The Ministers stressed the importance of promoting a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system. They recommitted themselves to continuing to make positive efforts designed to ensure that developing country Member States, especially the least developed countries, could secure a share in the growth of world trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development and that provisions truly effective for special and differential treatment should remain an integral part of the multilateral negotiations. In that regard, they called for strengthened complementarity between the work of UNCTAD, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other relevant agencies with a view to realizing the full development potential of trade.

55. The Ministers expressed serious concern at the lack of meaningful progress made in the Doha Development Round of WTO negotiations, in particular with regard to domestic support and market access issues of interest to developing countries and the efforts by some Member States to undermine the commitments contained in the Doha Development Agenda. The Ministers welcomed the commitment arising from the tenth ministerial conference of WTO to maintaining development at the centre of future negotiations and the reaffirmation of the principles of special and differential treatment, the flexibility for developing countries and collective commitment to advancing on the issues raised in Doha. In that regard, they urged all WTO members to uphold and reiterate their commitment to promoting an apolitical, universal, fair and balanced, open, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, equitable, rules-based and predictable multilateral

trading system that has development at its centre and that would enable developing countries, especially the least developed countries, to secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development and to fully integrate into the multilateral trading system.

56. The Ministers emphasized the importance of facilitating accession to WTO, especially for developing countries, recognizing the contribution that that would make to the rapid and full integration of those countries into the multilateral trading system. In that regard, they urged the accession process to be accelerated without political impediments and in an expeditious and transparent manner for developing countries that had applied for membership in WTO and reaffirmed the importance of the Organization's decision of 25 July 2012 on accession by the least developed countries.

57. The Ministers recognized the significant potential of regional economic integration and interconnectivity to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development and committed themselves to strengthening regional cooperation and regional trade agreements.

58. The Ministers recalled paragraph 29 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including the decision to increase the frequency of meetings of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters to two sessions per year, with a duration of four working days each, and to increase the engagement of the Committee with the Economic and Social Council through the special meeting of the Council on international cooperation in tax matters, with a view to enhancing intergovernmental consideration of tax issues. In that regard, they urged the faithful and timely implementation of the above-mentioned decision.

59. The Ministers committed to scaling up international tax cooperation. They encouraged countries, in accordance with their national capacities and circumstances, to work together to strengthen transparency and adopt appropriate policies, including multinational enterprises reporting country-by-country to tax authorities where they operate, providing access to beneficial ownership information for competent authorities and progressively advancing towards the automatic exchange of tax information among tax authorities as appropriate, with assistance to developing countries, especially the least developed countries, as needed. Tax incentives can be an appropriate policy tool. To end harmful tax practices, however, countries can engage in voluntary discussions on tax incentives in regional and international forums.

60. The Ministers stressed that developing countries should attach importance to scaling up international tax cooperation and combating illicit financial flows in order to mobilize domestic resources for the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministers stressed the importance of eliminating safe havens that create incentives for the transfer abroad of stolen assets and illicit financial flows. They reiterated their commitment to working to strengthen regulatory frameworks at all levels to further increase transparency and the accountability of financial institutions, the corporate sector and public administrations. The Ministers reaffirmed that they would strengthen international cooperation and national institutions to combat money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

61. The Ministers expressed their concern over illicit financial flows and related tax avoidance and evasion, corruption and money-laundering by using certain practices, with negative impacts for the world economy, in particular for developing countries. They maintained that, while there was increasing recognition of the central role of tax systems in development and the importance of international cooperation on tax matters, there was still no single global inclusive forum for international tax cooperation at the intergovernmental level. There was also not enough focus placed on the development dimension of those issues. In that regard, the Ministers reiterated the need to fully upgrade the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters to an intergovernmental body, provide adequate resources to the Committee to fulfil its mandate and increase the participation of experts from developing countries at its meetings. Doing so would be critical to transforming the current Committee from experts acting in their own capacity to an intergovernmental subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, with experts representing their respective Governments.

62. The Ministers will work towards full and equal access to formal financial services for all. The Ministers will also work for the international system to ensure that the policy and regulatory environment supports financial market stability and promotes financial inclusion in a balanced manner and with appropriate consumer protection. The Ministers encouraged, as appropriate and in accordance with national laws and regulations, the use of innovative tools, including mobile banking, payment platforms and digitized payments. The Ministers looked forward to strengthening capacity development for developing countries, including through the United Nations development system. The Ministers will work to ensure that adequate and affordable financial services are available to migrants and their families in both home and host countries, including by reducing the average transaction cost of migrant remittances, by 2030, to less than 3 per cent of the amount transferred, and to ensure that no remittance corridor requires charges higher than 5 per cent by 2030. In that regard, the Ministers looked forward to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

63. The Ministers expressed profound concern over the progressive decline in correspondent banking relationships with developing countries in the light of recent derisking actions by certain major international banking partners. They underscored that such indiscriminate acts posed an existential threat to the financial stability of the affected countries and would undermine their efforts towards sustainable socioeconomic growth and development. The Ministers called upon all relevant institutions, including the Financial Stability Board, the Financial Action Task Force and IMF, to urgently resolve the problems being faced by those Member States suffering from the loss of correspondent banking relationships so as to avert a threat to their national economies and their financial and international trade security.

64. The Ministers noted the outcome of the fourteenth session of UNCTAD, held in Nairobi from 17 to 22 July 2016, on the theme "From decisions to actions", which reaffirmed the core mandate of UNCTAD, as defined in the Accra Accord, and confirmed the role of the organization as the focal point for an integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development, while enhancing synergies and

complementarities with other United Nations and international organizations, as well as its role in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

65. The Ministers called upon UNCTAD to enhance its work towards addressing the trade and development challenges of all developing countries and, in so doing, to strengthen its work on the special problems of the least developed countries, African countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies and the related problems and challenges faced by middle-income countries, as well as to assist transit developing countries with their specific needs and challenges, in particular in relation to infrastructure development and transport. The Ministers underscored and commended the pivotal role of UNCTAD, in particular through its technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries before, during and after the process of accession to WTO.

66. The Ministers fully supported the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which will be held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016, and expressed appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for hosting the third session of the preparatory committee in Surabaya from 25 to 27 July 2016. They recognized the objectives of the Conference, which are aimed at securing renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, assessing accomplishments to date, addressing poverty and identifying and addressing new and emerging challenges. The Ministers expressed the hope that the deliberations and decisions of Habitat III would lead to greater attention to and awareness of issues regarding cities and human settlements and to increased international cooperation in the field. The Ministers remained firmly supportive of strengthening the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in both its normative and operational work, in order to fulfil its coordinating role in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

67. The Ministers stressed the importance of human settlements and their direct impact on achieving sustainable development, especially in developing countries. They reiterated that urbanization and human settlements should enhance the right to development according to the Declaration on the Right to Development, in particular for developing countries. In that context, the role of international cooperation is crucial in providing additional, adequate, sustainable and predictable means of implementation, including finance, technology transfer or capacity enhancement as a means of supporting national efforts and capacities to implement the New Urban Agenda. They emphasized the important role of the United Nations and developed countries in assisting developing countries in that regard.

68. The Ministers further stressed that the 2030 Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, should contribute to the international community's efforts towards the effective management of the challenges in that regard and provide an opportunity to promote a positive, mutually reinforcing relationship between cities and their surroundings across the human settlements continuum.

69. The Ministers reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as a provider of specialized services for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrial development. They believed that

UNIDO had an important role to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and as the central agency in the United Nations for all matters relating to industrialization. In that regard, the Ministers were greatly concerned by the continuing withdrawal of developed countries from UNIDO, mainly European countries. They agreed that, in order to discourage further withdrawals, it would be important to enhance the visibility of UNIDO and its mandate.

70. The Ministers called upon the countries that had left UNIDO, namely, the United States of America, France, Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, Portugal and Lithuania, to rejoin the organization. They also appealed to the countries that had expressed their intention to withdraw, namely, Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands, to reconsider and maintain their membership in UNIDO.

71. The Ministers underlined that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls was fundamentally linked to sustainable development. Eradicating poverty, addressing persistent inequalities in income and wealth while ensuring access to opportunities and economic outcomes aimed at equitable and inclusive growth for a healthy, environmentally sustainable, peaceful and prosperous planet, as set out in the 2030 Agenda is a tall order. More importantly, it is simply not possible when half the world's population continues to endure discrimination and persistent inequalities and lacks access to basic services, opportunities and economic and other resources.

72. The Ministers recognized that violence and discrimination against women and girls continued to be a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and development and reaffirmed their commitment to taking action to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls through the strengthening of institutional mechanisms, legal frameworks and financing.

73. In that regard, the Ministers reiterated the important role of women in economic growth and development. They expressed concern over the fact that the potential of women to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development as leaders, participants and agents of change had not been fully realized. They therefore encouraged prioritizing measures to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in all spheres of society. In addition, they underlined the contributions of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in unlocking economic potential, especially that of women and girls as drivers of sustainable development, since such enterprises are key to fostering sustained and inclusive economic growth in most developing countries.

74. The Ministers expressed their support for efforts to improve geographic distribution in the Secretariat and for more transparency in the recruitment process and stressed the need to increase the representation of developing countries in the United Nations, in particular at the senior levels, and in that regard they encouraged candidatures coming from the global South for such positions, including for the post of Secretary-General.

75. The Ministers reaffirmed their continued support for the principles, goals and objectives set out in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, which is a major outcome document representing a

comprehensive framework on population and development matters. They stressed that the implementation of the Programme of Action remains crucial for the eradication of poverty and hunger in all its forms in an irreversible manner. Additionally, it remains critical for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular with regard to ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action.

76. The Ministers recognized the vast potential of young people to contribute to sustainable development and social cohesion and noted that the unavailability of quality employment in most developing countries not only blocked the successful transition of young people from school to decent jobs, but also impeded economic growth and development as a whole. Therefore, it is important that efforts at every level be taken to improve the quality of and access to education and to enhance the acquisition of skills for young people. The Ministers encouraged the international community, including the United Nations and development agencies, to continue and enhance their support, both technically and financially, in education, training and skills development for young people.

77. The Ministers reaffirmed the need to create a conducive environment for strengthening and supporting all families, recognizing that equality between women and men and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members are essential to family well-being and to society at large. They noted the importance of the reconciliation of work and family life and recognized the principle of shared parental responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. They also affirmed the need to continue their efforts to develop appropriate policies and programmes that address family poverty, social exclusion, domestic violence, work-family balance and intergenerational issues and to share good practices in those areas.

78. The Ministers recognized the need for a broader and a more people-centred preventive approach to disaster risk and that disaster risk reduction practices needed to be multi-hazard, multisectoral, inclusive and accessible in order to be efficient and effective. In that regard, the Ministers recalled the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, reaffirming that disaster-prone developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and African countries, as well as middle-income countries facing specific challenges, warrant particular attention in view of their higher vulnerability and risk levels, which often greatly exceed their capacity to respond to and recover from disasters, and recognizing that similar attention and appropriate assistance should also be extended to other disaster-prone countries with specific characteristics, such as archipelagic countries and those with extensive coastlines.

79. The Ministers reaffirmed that humanitarian emergencies arising out of natural and man-made disasters and other causes and outbreaks of epidemics or other global health threats deserved to be given the same level of attention as those arising out of armed conflicts. The devastating effects of climate change are real and sudden. Extreme natural disasters can affect the environment, the economy and society and reverse hard-earned developmental gains overnight. The massive humanitarian consequences that follow are even more catastrophic. Millions of lives are lost,

while many are forcibly displaced and separated from their families. In a similar vein, the devastating humanitarian crisis resulting from other forced displacement equally deserves the attention of the international community, which should spare no effort to invest in durable solutions.

80. The Ministers stressed that General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the guiding principles in its annex remained the global framework for humanitarian assistance and coordination. At the same time, they are mindful of the need to further strengthen the coordination of relief efforts in order to support affected States in their humanitarian response to deliver effectively to communities in need.

81. In that context, the Ministers also recognized the importance of actions of humanitarian assistance as part of a comprehensive process of disaster risk management and the promotion of sustainable development.

82. The Ministers recognized the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination.

83. The Ministers stressed that migration was an enabler of development. The roles and responsibilities of the countries of origin, transit and destination should be appropriately balanced. It is crucial to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of their migration status, refugees and displaced persons. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, in particular in developing countries.

84. The Ministers recognized that international migration was a multidimensional reality of major relevance to the development of origin, transit and destination countries that must be addressed in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner. They endeavoured to increase cooperation on access to and the portability of earned benefits, enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills, lower the costs of recruitment for migrants and combat unscrupulous recruiters, in accordance with national circumstances and legislation. They further endeavoured to implement effective social communications strategies on the contribution of migrants to sustainable development in all its dimensions, in particular in countries of destination, in order to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, facilitate social integration and protect migrants' human rights through national frameworks. They reaffirmed the need to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially those of women and children, regardless of their migration status.

85. The Ministers expressed their commitment to protecting the human rights of migrant children, given their vulnerability, in particular of unaccompanied migrant children, and to providing for their health, education and psychosocial development, ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in policies of integration, return and family reunification.

86. The Ministers reaffirmed that remittance flows constituted sources of private capital, complemented domestic savings and were instrumental in improving the well-being of recipients. The Ministers stressed that remittances could not be considered a substitute for foreign direct investment, official development assistance, debt relief or other public sources of financing for development.

87. The Ministers also stressed the need to further address and promote conditions for cheaper, faster and safer transfers of remittances in both source and recipient countries and, as appropriate, encouraged opportunities for development-oriented investment in recipient countries by beneficiaries who were willing and able to take such action.

88. The Ministers noted the decision arrived at in the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants to launch a process of intergovernmental negotiations in 2016, leading to the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration at an intergovernmental conference to be held in 2018.

89. The Ministers took note of the Bali Declaration on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime of the sixth ministerial conference of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, held in Bali, Indonesia, on 23 March 2016.

90. The Ministers reaffirmed that antimicrobial resistance was a universal challenge for all humankind and required international cooperation to achieve action at the local, national and regional levels. It has the potential to challenge the international community's ability to deal with common infections at the global level and therefore have a serious impact on global public health and on overall development gains achieved to date. Furthermore, failure to address antimicrobial resistance can hamper efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, in particular in developing countries.

91. In that regard, the Ministers reiterated the importance of enhancing international cooperation in the realm of antimicrobial resistance, including through the fulfilment of international obligations and commitments in development cooperation. They stressed that, through such implementation, addressing antimicrobial resistance must not in any way further hinder affordable and equitable access to existing and new antimicrobial medicines, vaccines and diagnostic tools, taking into account the needs of all countries, in line with the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance of the World Health Organization.

92. The Ministers expressed their commitment to the accelerated implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. In that regard, they reiterated their opposition to all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all parts of the world and expressed deep concern over the resurgence of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all parts of the world. They reaffirmed that all forms of racism and xenophobia, as well as foreign occupation, constituted serious violations of human rights, which should be rejected through all political and legal means. They condemned all forms of racism and discrimination spread through new communications technologies, including the Internet.

93. The Ministers noted the programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, including the establishment of a forum to serve as a consultation mechanism, the elaboration of a draft United Nations declaration on the rights of people of African descent and the adoption and

implementation of policies and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent.

94. The Ministers took note with appreciation of the high-level signature ceremony held on 22 April 2016 for the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the high-level event for ratification or acceptance held on 21 September 2016. They stressed the importance of both the entry into force of the Agreement and of delivering major tasks to enhance pre-2020 implementation, including action on adaptation, which is an urgent priority for developing countries. Financing for adaptation is critical and securing the continued role of the Adaptation Fund in pre-2020 and post-2020 is welcomed and should be enhanced.

95. The Ministers stressed that the Paris Agreement was a result of the collective and tireless efforts of all Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change working constructively in a spirit of compromise for efforts to address climate change through enhancing the implementation of the Framework Convention, including its provisions and principles, in particular equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. As the Agreement moves towards its implementation phase, they reiterated the importance of preserving the delicate balance of all the issues that had been resolved in Paris and the principles and provisions of the Framework Convention. They also recognized the importance of developed countries continuing to take the lead in addressing climate change, in particular in the implementation of the Agreement in accordance with historical responsibilities and their respective capabilities.

96. The Ministers emphasized that developed countries should continue to take the lead on mitigation by undertaking and increasing economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets for their pledges and nationally determined contributions. For developing countries, capacity-building support for climate action is critical and should be based on and responsive to national needs and foster country ownership. The process of capacity-building must be participatory, country-driven and cross-cutting. Enhanced financial and technological support from developed countries will allow for effective implementation and the enhanced ambition of developing countries.

97. The Ministers stressed the need to address the adverse impacts of and reduce vulnerability to climate change. They looked forward to the mobilization of new and predictable additional resources, with developed countries continuing to take the lead through the provision of finance, technology transfer and capacity-building to developing countries.

98. The Ministers looked forward to the twenty-second Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 7 to 18 November 2016, and to an outcome that prioritizes the needs and challenges of developing countries.

99. The Ministers recalled the importance of oceans for sustainable development, as embodied in Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, various decisions taken by the former Commission on Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and

sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Oceans, seas, islands and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical for global food security and for sustaining economic prosperity and the well-being of many national economies, particularly in developing countries. In that regard, the Ministers also recalled that targets relating to means of implementation, including target 14.a, on increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacities and transferring marine technology in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and the least developed countries, were crucial for the achievement of sustainable development.

100. In the context of the increasing awareness of oceans as an important factor for development, the Ministers recognized the importance of maintaining political momentum to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14. In that regard, the Ministers welcomed the decision to hold the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, as mandated in General Assembly resolutions 70/226 and 70/303.

101. The Ministers recalled the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. In that regard, the Ministers emphasized that the basic principle enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and in General Assembly resolution 2749 (XXV), applicable to those resources, was that of the common heritage of mankind and that a specific legal regime for the biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction needed to be developed in the form of an instrument under the Convention based on that principle. Such an instrument has to be negotiated by consensus as a package and negotiations must encompass the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including marine genetic resources, including questions on the sharing of benefits and measures such as area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, environmental impact assessments and capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology, recognizing that neither participation in the negotiations nor their outcome might affect the legal status of non-parties to the Convention or any other related agreements with regard to those instruments, or the legal status of parties to the Convention or any other related agreements with regard to those instruments.

102. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the discussion of the preparatory committee established by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/292 with a view to making substantive recommendations to the Assembly on the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention and recalled that the objective of the new instrument would be both to conserve and to sustainably use marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Ministers also reiterated the importance of the new instrument being based on the important principle of the common heritage of mankind, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and in Assembly resolution 2479 (XXV).

103. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the vulnerability of mountain ecosystems to the increasing adverse impacts of climate change, extreme weather events, deforestation and forest degradation, land use change and land degradation, sand and dust storms and their slow recovery from natural disasters, noting that mountain glaciers around the world were retreating and becoming thinner, with increasing impacts on the environment and on the sustainable livelihoods and well-being of mountain peoples and of large portions of the world population, including rising food insecurity and water scarcity in developing countries. In that regard, they highlighted the need to prioritize the special and urgent attention to sustainable mountain development, including by focusing on specific challenges and opportunities, in order to realize the pledges to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first, as set out in the 2030 Agenda.

104. The Ministers recognized that the United Nations Forum on Forests, with its universal membership and comprehensive mandate, played a vital role in addressing challenges and issues relating to forests in a holistic and integrated manner and in promoting policy coordination and cooperation to achieve the sustainable management of all types of forests and of trees outside forests. The Ministers also encouraged the parties to the Forum to present their contributions to the strategic plan for forests for the period 2017-2030 and to the quadrennial programme of work, in conformity with Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33. They encouraged other forest-related forums, initiatives and processes to cooperate with the Forum to achieve sustainable forest management.

105. The Ministers recognized sand and dust storms as a serious challenge to sustainable development in the affected countries and regions. They called upon the United Nations system to play its role in advancing international cooperation and support to combat sand and dust storms and invited all relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and all other related organizations to integrate into their respective cooperation frameworks and operational programmes measures and actions aimed at combating sand and dust storms, including the following measures: enhancing capacity-building at the national level; the development and implementation of regional and subregional programmes and projects; the sharing of information, best practices and experiences and the boosting of technical cooperation; efforts to control and prevent the main factors of sand and dust storms; and the development of early warning systems as tools. They also stressed the importance of addressing the socioeconomic and environmental challenges of the affected countries and of ways to address combating sand and dust storms in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

106. The Ministers recalled that the international community had made a commitment to supporting the implementation of relevant strategies and programmes of action, including the Istanbul Programme of Action and the recently adopted outcome document of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of its implementation, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, and the importance of supporting Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, all of which are integral to the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, international cooperation to provide assistance in terms of capacity-building in areas of need, such as improved

access to education and health, productive capacity and trade capacity, the development of environmentally sound technology and climate change mitigation and adaptation, would be a crucial step forward. Those specific programmes of action for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries, however, must remain the most important entry points for the international community to focus its attention and resources in assisting these groups of countries. They also recognized the importance of addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by middle-income countries.

107. The Ministers recalled the special needs of Africa and recognized that, while economic growth had improved, there was a need to sustain the recovery, which was fragile and uneven, to face the ongoing adverse impacts of multiple crises on development and the serious challenges that those impacts posed to efforts to combat poverty and hunger, which could further undermine the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals in Africa.

108. The Ministers expressed profound concern about the fact that the commitment to doubling aid to Africa by 2010, as articulated at the Summit of the Group of Eight held in Gleneagles, United Kingdom, had not been entirely reached, and in that regard stressed the need to make rapid progress in order to fulfil that and other donor commitments to increasing aid through a variety of means, including the provision of new additional resources and the transfer of technology to and the building of capacity in African countries, and to supporting their sustainable development. They called for continued support for Africa's development initiatives, including Agenda 2063 (The Africa We Want) and its 10-year plan of action, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. On the other hand, they welcomed the support that some developing countries had extended to Africa through South-South and triangular cooperation programmes.

109. The Ministers welcomed the political declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, which was held in Ankara from 27 to 29 May 2016, and endorsed by the General Assembly on 25 July 2016 in its resolution 70/294.

110. The Ministers underlined the importance of the principles of universality and inclusiveness, which must not be forgotten, in order to enhance the capacities of the least developed countries in their efforts to achieve the priority areas set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action and to implement the 2030 Agenda. With strong support, coordinated action and the acceleration of support from the international community, the least developed countries will be able to overcome their structural weaknesses, and such support will lead to having at least half of them fulfil the graduation criteria by 2020.

111. In addition, the Ministers were encouraged by the recent rebound in ODA to the least developed countries and called upon all development partners to provide 0.20 per cent of their gross national income to those countries, as committed. They were also encouraged by those who were allocating at least 50 per cent of their ODA to those countries.

112. The Ministers also reaffirmed that fulfilling the commitments of the ministerial decisions of WTO for duty-free and quota-free market access for all products from all least developed countries and the least developed country-friendly rules of origin regime was urgently needed to reverse the decline in the global trade share of those countries. In addition, fulfilling those commitments would also contribute to the achievement of the target contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action of doubling the share of least developed countries in global export. In that regard, it is important that at least 50 per cent of the Aid for Trade by development partners be allotted to the least developed countries.

113. The Ministers expressed their concern that the ongoing global financial and economic crisis was clearly undermining development in all developing countries and recalled that the modest development gains, in particular those in the least developed countries, made over the years were being reversed, pushing a larger number of their people to extreme poverty. Many least developed countries continue to lag behind in meeting most of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

114. The Ministers stressed the need for the international community to remain vigilant in monitoring the debt situation of the least developed countries and to continue to take effective measures, preferably within existing frameworks, when applicable, to address the debt problem of those countries, including through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate, for the multilateral and bilateral debt owed by the least developed countries to creditors, both public and private. They reiterated their commitment to working through existing initiatives, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. They reaffirmed the importance of transparency in debt management.

115. The Ministers underlined the urgent need to fully operationalize the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries by 2017, in view of its potential to foster productive capacity, structural transformation, poverty eradication and sustainable development. They also called upon all relevant stakeholders to ensure continued support for the technology bank.

116. The Ministers reaffirmed that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security and that peace and security would be at risk without sustainable development. In that regard, they further recognized that the least developed countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and those experiencing political instability, or unable to deliver basic State services, had specific structural challenges and required context-specific approaches, including targeted national policies and international support measures, to address those challenges and to support peacebuilding, state-building activities and sustainable development. The Ministers took note of the principles set out by the Group of Seven Plus in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States for countries that are, or have been, affected by conflict.

117. The Ministers recognized the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries arising from their landlockedness, their remoteness from world markets and geographical constraints that impose serious impediments for export earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization, and

that therefore adversely affect their overall sustainable development. They expressed concern that the efforts of such countries towards sustainable development were affected by the frequent falling of commodity prices and that the they were highly exposed to climate change and disproportionately affected by its adverse impacts. The Ministers called upon the development partners, transit countries and international organizations to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action and establish special facilities for those countries, as appropriate, to assist them in executing and scaling up trade facilitation initiatives and the effective implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and Transit Organization, and invited multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks to establish dedicated infrastructure funding for those countries. The Ministers noted the declaration adopted at the fifth meeting of trade ministers of landlocked developing countries, held in Geneva in June 2016, in which the ministers called for the establishment of a specific work programme for landlocked developing countries at WTO in time for the eleventh ministerial conference of WTO, the communiqué adopted at the ministerial meeting of the group of landlocked developing countries held on the margins of the tenth ministerial conference of WTO, held in Nairobi in December 2015, and the ministerial communiqué of the landlocked developing countries adopted prior to the fourteenth session of UNCTAD held in July 2016.

118. The Ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action and encouraged the landlocked developing countries, transit countries, their development partners, the United Nations system and all other actors to implement, in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner, the actions that had been agreed upon in the Vienna Programme of Action in its six priority areas, namely, fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation and means of implementation. Furthermore, the Ministers reaffirmed that the Vienna Programme of Action was integral to the 2030 Agenda. They emphasized the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Vienna Programme of Action and encouraged coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation. The Ministers stressed that the availability of and use of accessible, timely, reliable and high-quality disaggregated data to measure poverty in all its forms and dimensions and progress on sustainable development underpinned the efforts to leave no one behind and called upon the development partners and international organizations to assist landlocked developing countries in building and strengthening their official national capacities for data collection, disaggregation, dissemination and analysis. They called for a revitalized global partnership based on renewed and strengthened partnerships between landlocked developing countries and the transit countries, their development partners and other stakeholders for the full, successful and timely implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

119. The Ministers reaffirmed that small island developing States remained a "special case" for sustainable development owing to their unique and particular vulnerabilities, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base and exposure to global environmental challenges, including to a large range of

impacts from climate change and potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters. Climate change and sea level rise continue to pose a significant risk to small island developing States and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, for some, represent the gravest threat to their survival and viability, including, for some, through the loss of territory.

120. The Ministers reaffirmed the Samoa Pathway, adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014, which represented the international community's renewed political commitment to the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Ministers further recalled that the Samoa Pathway also set out new modalities for strengthened action on a range of challenges and priorities concerning small island developing States and demonstrated how partnerships with different stakeholders could be nurtured and utilized as one of the important means of implementing the outcome document and building resilience to the particular challenges faced by those States. In that regard, the Ministers welcomed the progress made in implementing the Samoa Pathway through the establishment of the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework, which will monitor and ensure the full implementation of pledges and commitments though partnerships for small island developing States and encourage new partnerships.

121. The Ministers took note with great appreciation of the special event of the Economic and Social Council on delivering the 2030 Agenda and the role of the United Nations system in middle-income countries, held on 26 May 2016 as part of the Council's dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system. They recalled that, notwithstanding notable reductions in poverty, middle-income countries were still home to most of the world's people living in poverty and that inequalities and gaps remained. They continue to face significant challenges to achieving sustainable development. The Ministers reiterated the urgent need to identify ways and means to ensure that the diverse and specific development needs of middle-income countries would be appropriately considered and addressed, in a tailored fashion, in their relevant strategies and policies, with a view to promoting a coherent and comprehensive approach towards individual countries. In that regard, the United Nations development system must improve its support for different country contexts, including how to provide efficient, effective, more coordinated and better and focused support to middle-income countries.

122. The Ministers recognized the importance of addressing the specific challenges facing middle-income countries. In order to ensure that achievements made to date are sustained, efforts to address ongoing challenges should be strengthened through the exchange of experiences, improved coordination and better and focused support from the United Nations development system, the international financial institutions, regional organizations and other stakeholders. The Ministers also acknowledged that official development assistance and other concessional finance were still important for a number of those countries and had a role to play in targeting results, taking into account the specific needs of those countries. In that regard, the Ministers highlighted the need to make all institutional arrangements necessary to support middle-income countries within the United Nations system and its respective mandates, in particular through a comprehensive system-wide and

long-term strategy aimed at facilitating sustainable development cooperation with and coordinated support for those countries.

123. The Ministers reaffirmed that the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should provide a key contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through the strengthening of national capacity. They also reaffirmed that strengthening the role and capacity of the United Nations development system to assist countries in achieving their development goals required continued improvement in its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, inter-agency efforts and impact, along with a significant increase in resources. In that regard, the fundamental characteristics of United Nations operational activities for development must remain, among others, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism and their ability to respond to the development needs of programme countries in a flexible manner. Moreover, operational activities should be carried out for the benefit of recipient countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own national policies and priorities for development.

124. The Ministers reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly was the sole main committee of the Organization entrusted with responsibilities for administrative, financial and budgetary matters. In that regard, the Ministers requested that any budgetary, financial and administrative matters, including those relating to the establishment of a peacekeeping operation or a special political mission, be discussed solely in the framework of the Fifth Committee, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

125. The Ministers reaffirmed that any Secretariat and management reform efforts, including on its budget process, must not be intended to change the intergovernmental, multilateral and international nature of the Organization, but must strengthen the ability of Member States to perform their oversight and monitoring role and that prior consideration by and approval of Member States is essential in all cases in which the measures to be implemented fall under the prerogatives of the General Assembly. In that regard, they recalled Assembly resolution 66/257. They also reaffirmed the right of the entire membership of the United Nations to pronounce itself on the administration of the Organization, including on budgetary matters, and the need for continuous interaction and dialogue between the Secretariat and the Assembly aimed at fostering a positive environment for the negotiations, the decision-making process and the implementation of the reform measures.

126. The Ministers strongly supported the oversight role performed by the General Assembly, as well as its relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies in planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. In that regard, they renewed their commitment to strengthening the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Ministers also urged the rest of the membership of the United Nations to actively participate in the sessions of the Committee.

127. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the strategic framework as the principal policy directive of the Organization and that its content should fully reflect the mandates approved by Member States, including the Financial Rules and Regulations of the United Nations.

128. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of preserving the budget methodology, the established budgetary procedures and practices and the rules and regulations governing the budget process, and stressed that the level of resources to be approved by the General Assembly must be commensurate with all mandated programmes and activities in order to ensure their full and effective implementation. In that regard, they underlined that the existing recosting methodology was a fundamental and integral element of the budgetary methodology agreed to in the Assembly and affirmed that the existing recosting methodology ensured that mandated activities would not be negatively affected by currency fluctuations and inflation.

129. The Ministers underlined that the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments reflected changes in the relative economic situations of the States Members of the United Nations. The Ministers also reaffirmed the principle of "capacity to pay" as the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations and rejected any change to the elements of the current methodology for the preparation of the scale of assessments aimed at increasing the contributions of developing countries. In that regard, they emphasized that the core elements of the current methodology of the scale of assessment, such as base period, gross national income, conversion rates, low per capita income adjustment, gradient, floor, ceiling for the least developed countries and debt stock adjustment must be kept intact and were not negotiable.

130. The Ministers stressed that the current maximum assessment rate, or ceiling, had been fixed as a political compromise, was contrary to the principle of the capacity to pay and was a fundamental source of distortion in the scale of assessments. In that regard, they urged the General Assembly to undertake a review of the arrangement, in accordance with paragraph 2 of its resolution 55/5 C.

131. The Ministers emphasized that organizations that had an enhanced observer status at the United Nations giving them the rights and privileges usually applied only to observer States, such as the right to speak in the general debate of the General Assembly and the right of reply, should also have the same financial obligations to the United Nations as observer States. In that regard, they urged the Assembly to consider a decision on an assessment for such organizations.

132. The Ministers affirmed that the current principles and guidelines for the apportionment of the expenses of peacekeeping operations approved by the General Assembly in its relevant resolutions should constitute a basis for any discussion on the peacekeeping scale. In that regard, the Ministers stressed that the peacekeeping scale must clearly reflect the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security. The Ministers also recalled that the economically less developed countries had limited capacity to contribute to the budgets of peacekeeping operations. In that regard, the Ministers emphasized that any discussion on the system of discounts applied to the peacekeeping scale should take into account the conditions of developing countries whose current positions must not be negatively affected. The Ministers stressed, in that regard, that no member of the Group of 77 and China that is not a permanent member of the Security Council should therefore be categorized above level C.

133. The Ministers expressed their concern for the growing restrictive nature of "earmarked" contributions within different United Nations entities, such as UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the United Nations Children's Fund. They also emphasized that regular resources were the bedrock of those entities and were essential to maintain and fulfil their universal mandate and work. The declining trend of regular resources and a high concentration of earmarked funds therefore put the organizations at risk of not having the capacity to deliver on their programmes. The Ministers appealed for assuring stable and predictable contributions and noted the important need to emphasize the quality, flexibility, predictability and alignment of such contributions.

134. The Ministers reiterated their support for the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law, established in General Assembly resolution 2099 (XX), for the purpose of contributing to greater knowledge of international law as a means of strengthening international peace and security and promoting friendly relations and cooperation among States. They recalled that the Programme and its components were one of the cornerstones of the efforts of the United Nations to promote international law and that jurists, academics, diplomats and other public officials from developing countries greatly benefited from the regional courses on international law, fellowships, publications and the Audiovisual Library of International Law. In that regard, the Ministers welcomed the inclusion of additional resources under the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 for the organization of the regional courses in international law for Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean annually and for the continuation and further development of the Audiovisual Library of International Law. They also expressed their commitment to including the International Law Fellowship Programme, the seminars and regional training on international treaty laws and practice and the legal publications and training materials, as well as the funding necessary for the Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe Memorial Fellowship on the Law of the Sea, in the regular budget of the United Nations for the biennium 2018-2019.

135. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of respect for the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular of peoples living under colonial or foreign occupation and other forms of alien domination, which adversely affects their social and economic development, respect for the independence of States, national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, including through the use of information and communications technologies, in particular social networks, contrary to the principles of international law, for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and embodied in the international covenants on human rights, and stressed that full respect for the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter and international law inspired a full commitment to multilateralism.

136. The Ministers reaffirmed that the right to self-determination is a primordial right that anchors the United Nations. For developing countries, it has been and continues to be a beacon of hope for all those who struggle under the weight of occupation. In that context, in the implementation, follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda, the international community must not forget the severe difficulties

faced by peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation and strive to remove the obstacles to their full realization of the right to self-determination, which adversely affect their economic and social development and their ability to achieve and implement the Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure that they will not be left behind.

137. The Ministers reaffirmed, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States.

138. The Ministers deplored the lasting and massive negative impact of the brutal military aggression committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in July and August 2014 against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killing of more than 2,150 Palestinians, including hundreds of children and women, and injury to more than 11,000 Palestinians as a result of the lethal, indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israeli occupying forces, as well as the wanton destruction of thousands of Palestinian homes, vital civilian infrastructure, business properties, mosques, schools, hospitals, public institutions, farms and several United Nations facilities in Gaza. They expressed grave concern about the continuing obstruction of recovery owing to the Israeli blockade and the resulting deterioration of infrastructure and services and stressed the urgency of reconstruction. The Ministers deplored the systematic and grave breaches of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, committed by Israel in that regard. They called for accountability for those crimes and violations and called upon the Security Council, in line with its duty under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, to undertake serious follow-up efforts to bring an end to Israel's impunity and realize justice for the victims and to contribute to a peaceful and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

139. The Ministers reiterated their demand for the immediate and full lifting of the Israeli blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, which constitutes the massive collective punishment of its inhabitants in grave contravention of international humanitarian and human rights law. The Ministers requested all members of the international community, the United Nations and other international organizations and non-governmental organizations to help to provide the victims of the Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip with the required humanitarian assistance on an urgent basis. They also reiterated their call upon the international community to continue to provide much-needed development and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, among them Palestine refugees, during this critical period, in particular for reconstruction and economic recovery in the Gaza Strip, including through the United Nations agencies present on the ground and providing vital assistance, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

140. The Ministers expressed concern in that regard about the critical financial situation and recurrent underfunding of UNRWA and the effect on its programmes to address the humanitarian and development needs of the Palestine refugees, and urged States to contribute to UNRWA and to support efforts to ensure more sustained and predictable funding to the Agency, including by the United Nations.

141. The Ministers expressed deep concern about the further decline of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of illegal Israeli practices, which included but were not limited to the continuing colonization of Palestinian land by Israel, the occupying Power, in grave breach of international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and in flagrant violation of relevant United Nations resolutions and disrespect of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. In that regard, the Ministers demanded a halt to Israel's confiscation of Palestinian property, the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and the wall, the demolition of Palestinian homes and the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians. They also expressed grave concern over the frequent acts of violence, terror and incitement against Palestinian civilians and the destruction of Palestinian properties by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and called for action to hold the perpetrators accountable for those crimes.

142. The Ministers reaffirmed their unwavering support for the just cause of Palestine and solidarity with the Palestinian people. They reaffirmed their principled and long-standing support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the achievement of their legitimate national aspirations, including for freedom, independence, justice, peace and dignity in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and called for the exertion by the international community of the efforts necessary in support of those objectives.

143. The Ministers reiterated their call for the immediate and full withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the remaining occupied land in Lebanon. They reaffirmed their support for a Middle East peace process aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 1850 (2008), and the principle of land for peace. In that context, they also reaffirmed their support for the Arab Peace Initiative, endorsed by the Arab Summit Conference in March 2002.

144. The Ministers reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources, and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of the natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which constitute violations of international law and severely undermine their ability to pursue sustainable development.

145. Recalling that 16 December 2015 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), the first resolution that specifically referred to the question of the Malvinas Islands, the Ministers reaffirmed the need for the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations in accordance with the principles and the objectives of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the Assembly in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful solution to the sovereignty dispute relating to the question of the Malvinas Islands, which seriously damages the economic capacities of the Argentine Republic and the need for both parties to refrain from

taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands are going through the process recommended by the Assembly.

146. Highlighting the right of the States members of the Group of 77 to permanent sovereignty over their energy resources, the Ministers expressed the view that the operations not authorized by the Government of Argentina in the Malvinas Islands area relating to the exploration of natural resources, especially hydrocarbon resources, were seriously detrimental to the sovereignty rights of the Argentine Republic over its continental shelf.

147. In that regard, the Ministers recognized the right of the Argentine Republic to take legal action with full respect for international law and relevant resolutions against non-authorized hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation activities in the referred area.

148. The Ministers welcomed the conclusion of negotiations and the announcement of a final agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army as an important step towards a stable and enduring peace in Colombia. The Ministers stressed that an equally determined and exemplary effort would be required to implement the agreements, and in that regard they called upon the international community to lend its full support to Colombia at such a critical stage of the process. The Ministers looked forward to the official signing ceremony of the agreement, to be held on 26 September 2016.

149. The Ministers reaffirmed the need to find a peaceful solution to the sovereignty issues facing developing countries, including the dispute over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, that had been unlawfully excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to independence, in violation of international law and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2066 (XX). Failure to resolve those decolonization and sovereignty issues would seriously damage and undermine the development and economic capacities and prospects of developing countries. Ministers noted with great concern that, notwithstanding the strong opposition of Mauritius, the United Kingdom purported to establish a "marine protected area" around the Chagos Archipelago, which would contravene international law and further impede the exercise by Mauritius of its sovereign rights over the archipelago and the right of return of Mauritius citizens who had been forcibly removed from the archipelago by the United Kingdom. In that regard, they noted the ruling of the arbitral tribunal in the case brought by Mauritius against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea that the "marine protected area" had been unlawfully established under international law. The Ministers resolved to support Mauritius in its endeavour to affirm its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

150. The Ministers also took note of the concern expressed by Maldives regarding the legal and technical issues arising from the illegal decision of the United Kingdom in 2010 to declare a "marine protected area" in the Chagos Archipelago that overlapped with the exclusive economic zone of Maldives, as declared in its Constitution, without prejudice to the future resolution of maritime delimitations.

151. The Ministers reaffirmed their firm rejection of the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries and reiterated the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasized that such actions not only undermined the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threatened freedom of trade and investment. The Ministers therefore called upon the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries.

152. The Ministers expressed their strongest rejection of the implementation of unilateral coercive measures and reiterated their solidarity with Cuba. As they welcomed the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States, and within that context, the visit of the President of the United States, Barack Obama, to Cuba, they reaffirmed their call upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on that sisterly nation for more than five decades. The Ministers, by recognizing that the actions taken by the executive branch of the Government of the United States to modify some aspects of the implementation of the blockade were positive, although limited in scope, encouraged the President of the United States to continue to take all action within his executive powers to substantially modify the application of the blockade against Cuba and the United States Congress to initiate, as soon as possible, a discussion on removing it.

153. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Sudan, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Sudan, and in that regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

154. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in that regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

155. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the country, and in that regard emphasized the importance of dialogue and called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

156. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Syrian Arab Republic, and in that regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

157. The Ministers reaffirmed their rejection of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which have a negative impact on the development and prosperity of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and in that regard called for an immediate lifting of those sanctions.

158. The Ministers took note with appreciation of the convening of the seventeenth summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which was held in Margarita

Island, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from 13 to 18 September 2016, recognized that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela assumed the presidency of the Movement and stressed their willingness to continue the work towards the achievement of their common interests, especially through the joint coordinating committee of the Group of 77 and the Movement.

159. The Ministers expressed their deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Thailand for its able leadership and for the excellent work achieved during 2016. The commitment and leadership shown by the Kingdom of Thailand as Chair in pursuing the goals and objectives of the Group of 77 was a source of profound appreciation and gratitude. The Ministers also commended the efficient work and continued valuable support provided by the executive secretariat of the Group in New York to the Chair and to the Member States and congratulated the Executive Secretary of the Group, Mourad Ahmia, for the appreciation award presented to him by the Chair of the ministerial meeting, in recognition of his outstanding leadership and continued dedicated service to the Group.

160. The Ministers warmly welcomed the election by acclamation of Ecuador as Chair of the Group of 77 for 2017.